

# **OFF THE DOCK**

**WITH D. A. MANN**

## **~ Working Your Willy into a Frazzle ~**

**6/6/25**

My normal priority when I'm drifting the Intracoastal is finding Pompano. Acting spoiled is a wonderful thing; but, it is not always the easiest thing to do or the best attitude to possess. In the end, it's what fishermen do – whether they are catching or not.

Now, with that being said, inshore fishing is not what it used to be. I was out all day last Friday drifting the incoming tide in the channel from marker 14 in the slow zone north of the Albee Bridge all the way *through* the slow zone at the north end right up to the Swing Bridge. In that entire stretch, the only thing hitting my Willy was Sail Cats – huge Sail Cats. And they were schooling right up to the boat following their “hooked” brother. In all my 50 years of fishing, I've never seen that.

Next stop, the Flats. Through it all, the Trout have remained plentiful from Blackburn Bay to Little Sarasota Bay. You'll hit “pockets” of them almost anywhere where there is a grass/sand patchwork on the bottom in 4 to 6 feet of water. These pockets usually contain the same size fish. I moved twice when everything was less than 14 inches. The third spot was the honey hole and I had 3 top-slot beauties in 15 minutes. With nothing else biting, the search for the elusive Pompano was again the goal of the day.

On the inside mouth of the Jetties in 15 feet at slack-tide, 2 large Whiting hit Mr. Willy. They fight like a Red and are fun to catch. With the tide now going out, I motored behind Snake and up to marker 14 in Roberts Bay to start my drift out-going. Dodging boat traffic was

challenging. By the time I reached marker 15, I had caught and released several Trout. Casting into the flats on the east side by Bird Island as I approached #16, I finally hooked-up with a Pompano (a real fighter at 17 inches – so much fun). A few drifts later, I caught a second slightly smaller one. I tried for another hour without success and headed home for the day with 3 Trout and my 2 Pompano on ice.

Overall, not a bad day; but a strange one. My Willy got frazzled in the morning but recouped nicely in the afternoon. When you have to hunt n' peck for the entire day, it will test your patience, your sanity, and your skills. The only thing that removes the frustration is that *Pompano Pull*. At that instant, you are right with the world and all is forgiven and forgotten. Amen.

PS: It helps if you tell your Willy that he's only got 3 casts to make it happen. Put the pressure on him instead of you. Besides, your shoulder is sore and your hands are cramping. And, we must not be late for happy hour.